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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAN AND CA/OCS/ACS/WHA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [AEMR](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: Ontario Struggling with Consular Notification SOP for Mass
Casualty Emergencies

Ref: Toronto 20

Sensitive but Unclassified - Please Protect Accordingly.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Officials from Emergency Management Ontario (EMO), other provincial government agencies, local first responders, and Toronto's Consular Corps attending an April 12 working group meeting discussed a proposed standard operating procedure (SOP) framework for informing Consular representatives of the welfare and whereabouts of their citizens during a complex emergency. While the working group has made progress in sensitizing government emergency management officials to the needs of Consular and foreign representatives during an emergency response, we are uncertain whether the proposed communication mechanisms would be robust enough to proactively push vital information to diplomatic representatives during a crisis in Ontario. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) About 25 representatives of Ontario Government Ministries; the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT); EMS and fire departments from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA); and Consular officials from the United Kingdom, Portugal, and the U.S. attended the April 12 working group meeting, chaired by Emergency Management Ontario. The participants generally agreed that existing communication structures were adequate to cope with small events with limited casualties. The thornier issue remains the access of foreign consular representatives to information collected by first responders and the Ontario Government on foreign citizens during a major emergency. Both UK and U.S. representatives recounted the difficulty in obtaining information from the Ontario Government during the 2005 crash of an Air France jet at Toronto's Pearson International Airport.

3. (SBU) Emergency Management Ontario presented a "Draft Notification Protocol for Consulates Receiving Information Concerning Foreign Nationals Involved in Major Events." UK, U.S., and Portuguese representatives noted that they had difficulty with the term "protocol" and informed the organizers that any formal agreement would require vetting by their respective Embassies and headquarters (NOTE. A copy of the draft will be sent by email to WHA/CAN and CA/OCS. END NOTE). In lieu of a formal protocol, the foreign consular representatives suggested that a simple Standard Operating Procedure that reflected the need of Consular representatives to aid their citizens in a time of crisis would be sufficient.

4. (SBU) EMO officials also described in detail an "Incident Management Structure" that acknowledged the need for foreign representatives to obtain real-time information about their nationals in an emergency. The "Provincial Emergency Operations Centre" (PEOC), a 24-hour operation that is rapidly expandable in the event of an emergency, would be the notional point of contact for all foreign representatives seeking information about a crisis and information about their nationals. The PEOC, which is managed by EMO and staffed by representatives of all involved provincial ministries, would include representatives of Ontario's Ministry of

Intergovernmental Affairs, and would have access to a liaison officer from DFAIT. First responders, and Ontario Government Ministries, including the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, both of which would play major roles in a crisis, would in turn feed information on foreign citizens to the PEOC, and assist foreign representatives in aiding their citizens.

15. (SBU) UK and U.S. representatives noted that while such a plan made sense on paper, it is unclear whether information would actually flow quickly enough through the government channels to foreign representatives in the event of an actual emergency. Fire department representatives noted that first responders in general were more immediately concerned about rendering aid to victims, regardless of nationality, and would not be in a position to collect nationality data, much less ensure that it was distributed to a Provincial Operations Centre. Other Ontario government participants suggested that many individuals may have privacy concerns and not want their governments to be notified.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: While Emergency Management Ontario has made some progress in raising awareness of the need of consular representatives to be "in the loop" on information that is collected on the welfare and whereabouts of their citizens during a crisis, it is unclear whether the Ontario government would actually be able to do so in a timely fashion during an actual emergency. The working group plans to meet again in mid to late May, hopefully to discuss a streamlined draft SOP that will aid the Ontario government in responding to the needs of foreign representatives. END COMMENT.

NAY